



CITY OF HOUSTON

EXECUTIVE ORDER

SUBJECT	Demolition of Dangerous Buildings in Houston Neighborhoods	E. O. No.
		1-19
		Effective Date
		UPON APPROVAL

1.0 PURPOSE

To implement a process for the immediate demolition of dangerous buildings located in Houston neighborhoods, including those areas that have been designated as Houston Hope neighborhoods.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Dangerous buildings pose a variety of risks to public health, safety and welfare. First, buildings that are not maintained in compliance with requirements of the City Code of Ordinances ("City Code") are a safety hazard to both neighborhood residents and public safety officials. Not only are these buildings unsightly, but they are also at constant risk of collapsing and injuring someone. In addition, these buildings are a health hazard, harboring infestations of insects, ectoparasites, rodents and other pests, which in turn spread to surrounding structures, such as neighboring houses whose owners must then abate these conditions in order to avoid violating City Code. Moreover, vagrants often use these buildings to conduct illegal activities, including the sale of narcotics and the fencing of stolen goods. The availability of dangerous buildings for criminal activity causes the crime rate in a particular neighborhood to expand and increase, affecting not just the property values but also the well-being of the residents.

For urban planning purposes, the City has designated certain areas of the City as Houston Hope neighborhoods. Houston Hope neighborhoods share some common characteristics: each of these neighborhoods is a high crime area with a large concentration of buildings that meet the definition of a dangerous building under section 10-361 of the City Code. As a result, Houston Hope neighborhoods are especially prone to experience the adverse impacts of dangerous buildings.

The negative effect of allowing a dangerous building to remain standing without abating its code violations also has fiscal repercussions. Boarding up a dangerous building is usually not an effective deterrent, as boards are easy to remove or displace, particularly when a building is not being monitored or maintained in any fashion. These conditions often occur in buildings where property tax delinquencies exceed three years. Moreover, the value of a dangerous building often depreciates to the point that demolition, rather than rehabilitation, is the most economically-effective means of eliminating the safety hazards associated with that building. Unfortunately, despite the City's issuance of citations for dangerous buildings in Houston neighborhoods, many of those buildings have not been demolished. While dangerous buildings remain standing, they continue to deteriorate, exacerbating the already hazardous conditions in the affected neighborhoods. As a result, this situation has now become a public safety emergency. It is therefore imperative that the City act immediately to identify those buildings that are beyond repair and to demolish them so that the underlying property can be improved and developed, alleviating the public health, safety and welfare concerns to neighborhood residents and creating economic and social value within the affected neighborhood.

Approved

B. J. White

Date Approved

10/20/09

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3.0 PROCEDURE

3.1 The City's Neighborhood Protection Corps shall identify dangerous buildings creating an imminent threat, as set out above, in Houston neighborhoods on the basis of one or more of the following criteria:

3.1.1 The building is vacant and inadequately secured;

3.1.2 The building cannot be reasonably repaired or renovated;

3.1.3 The building qualifies for demolition under Ch. 10, art. IX, Div. 4 of the City Code;

3.1.4 The building qualifies for demolition under Ch. 10, art. IX, Div. 7 of the City Code.

Ad valorem taxes having not been paid on the building or the underlying property in the last three years is additional evidence of a dangerous condition.


3.2 As part of the process for identifying dangerous buildings under this Order, all areas designated as Houston Hope neighborhoods will be inspected by the Neighborhood Protection Corps.

3.3 After identifying those buildings that meet the criteria of 3.1 of this Order, the Neighborhood Protection Corps shall coordinate with the Legal Department to implement and carry out a process for the immediate demolition of those buildings. In accomplishing the expedited demolition process, the City shall demolish those buildings that:

3.3.1 Have previously been found to be dangerous by a judicial or administrative body; or

3.3.2 Have been found to be dangerous in accordance with 3.1 of this Order.

3.4 Opportunity for a post demolition hearing pursuant to Ch. 10, art. IX, Div. 7 of the City Code shall be provided for any dangerous building demolished under 3.3.2 of this Order.

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